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**PÍSEMNÉ TESTOVÁNÍ DYSLEKTICKÝCH
DĚTÍ**

WRITTEN TESTING OF DYSLEXIC CHILDREN

**COMMENT TESTER DES ENFANTS
DYSLEXIQUES PAR ÉCRIT**

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Poděkování:

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ANOTACE

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá písemným testováním dyslektických dětí. Analýza současné situace na základních školách dokazuje, že žáci s poruchami učení mívají většinou horší známky z písemných prací než jejich spolužáci. V první části se projekt zabývá specifikací problémů těchto dětí a v části následující tvorbou testů přizpůsobených jejich potřebám. Tyto testy mají pomoci dětem prokázat skutečné znalosti bez negativního vlivu jejich poruchy učení. Cílem této práce je stanovení zásad, kterými by se měli učitelé při sestavování písemných prací pro dyslektické žáky řídit. Tyto výsledky mohou pomoci učitelům všech heterogenních tříd spravedlivě hodnotit své studenty.

ANNOTATION

This diploma thesis focuses on written testing of dyslexic children. The analysis of the contemporary situation at primary schools proves that pupils with learning difficulties usually do not succeed in English language tests as well as their schoolmates. After stating particularities of dyslexic children, this paper concentrates on designing tests that meet their specific needs. These tests should help the pupils perform their actual knowledge without being negatively influenced by their learning difficulties. The aim of the project is to set principles that must be considered by teachers while preparing tests for dyslexic children. The results of the research can guide teachers of all heterogeneous classes to assess their students rightly.

ANNOTATION

Ce mémoire raconte de la façon de tester des enfants dyslexiques par écrit. L'analyse de la situation contemporaine aux écoles primaires montre que les enfants avec des troubles d'apprentissage n'ont pas de résultats des test assez bons que leurs camarades de classe. Après avoir identifié des particularités des enfants dyslexiques, ce travail concentre à la formation des tests qui correspondent à leurs besoins spécifiques. Grâce à ces tests, les élèves peuvent démontrer leurs connaissances actuelles sans être négativement influencés par leur troubles d'apprentissage. Ce projet suggère des principes qui aident l'enseignant à préparer des tests pour des enfants dyslexiques. Les résultats de cette recherche peuvent servir aux enseignants de toutes les classes hétérogènes.

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Chapter 1 – ACADEMIC PART

1. SUBJECT OF THE RESEARCH

1.1 Motivation for the research

As a school girl, I never heard anything about dyslexia. Some of my schoolmates had problems with reading and writing but I thought that they did not try hard to learn. My opinion was also supported by the behaviour of my class teacher. She would give bad marks to these children and repeated that they should work more. She did not try to find out how she could help them. Since I was influenced by her approach, I thought that they were not clever enough or they were too lazy to be in our class. That was the reason why I was not surprised when some of them were forced to leave our class to attend a special school for “less intelligent” children. I thought it was right.

Fifteen years later, when I came to the first class of my teaching practice, I was shocked. Although I had not expected any miraculous pupils, the slow pace of work in the English class surprised me a lot. The children were speaking for the whole lesson but when they were asked to rewrite new vocabulary, it took them an extremely long time. Since I had not discussed the abilities and problems of these pupils with my supervising teacher beforehand, I could only guess the reason of this feature. After the lesson, my suspicion was confirmed. The teacher told me that it had been a class where the majority of children had some specific learning disabilities, mostly, they had problems with reading and writing. I did not know how I should teach them. I tried to concentrate on speaking activities but I knew that the aim of my lessons was not just oral communication but also written discourse. And it was the problem: I asked the teacher how I could teach these children to write but she did not know. She had neither consulted this issue with an expert nor read any special books. The only information she had was a general suggestion from the Consultancy Centre, incorporated in pupils’ school report. It concerned theoretical rules. For instance, it was necessary to modify the exercises given to dyslexic pupils and assessment should be more benevolent and motivating. But this recommendation did not specify any methods which could be used while teaching reading and writing in foreign

language lessons. It did not even specify a way these pupils should be tested. And, since testing represents an indispensable feature of language teaching, it has become the main focus of my investigation.

1.2. Teaching dyslexic children

1.2.1 Definition of dyslexia

To specify certain strategies that should be used while teaching dyslexic children, first of all, it is necessary to define the dyslexia.

The Orton Dyslexia Society Research Committee (1994) describes dyslexia as “a specific language-based disorder of constitutional origin characterized by difficulties in single word decoding, usually reflecting insufficient phonological processing. These difficulties in single word decoding are often unexpected in relation to age and other cognitive and academic abilities; ... Dyslexia is manifest[ed] by variable difficulty with different forms of language, often including, in addition to problems with reading, a conspicuous problem with acquiring proficiency in writing and spelling“ (Ott, 1997:4).

Pumfrey (1994) illustrated a discrepancy in skills of dyslexic children on an example of a 10-year child. It is evident from the table that the child’s reading ability corresponds to the age of a child who is almost four years younger. This is a significant difference that must be taken into account when designing any activities for dyslexic children.

Pupil of 10.0 years IQ 120		
The scores would be as follows:		
Degree of Dyslexia	Reading Age	Spelling Age
Severe dyslexia	6.3 years	6.4 years
Moderate dyslexia	8.3 years	7.4 years
Mild dyslexia	10.6 years	8.6 years

According to the World Federation of neurology (Levine & Seligmann, 1973:160), dyslexia represents “a disorder in children who, despite classroom experience, fail to attain

the language skills of reading, writing and spelling commensurate with their intellectual abilities”. As the research disclosed, “some children see words or letters upside down, backward or distorted in other ways; some children have a tendency to move their eyes from right to left; and others fail to remember what the sounds of certain letters are when written down – although they can remember the sound when the name of the letter is told them” (ibid).

Matějček (1985) defines dyslexia as a developmental learning difficulty that occurs as a result of disturbance of five basic preconditions for learning reading. Between these preconditions he counts the visual differentiation of shapes, auditory differentiation of sounds, visual and auditory memory, sense of rhythm and orientation in space and in time.

The cause of the problems included in the term dyslexia is usually a mild brain dysfunction which is often a result of a temporary lack of oxygen to the brain during the prenatal period or birth. In certain cases, dyslexia may be caused by genetic heritage as well.

The signs of dyslexia manifest mainly at school where dyslexic children do not manage to work in some activities as fast and as well as their schoolmates.

This is even more complicated when teaching and learning a foreign language. However, the dyslexic children are not a rare exception.

1.2.2 Number of dyslexic children

Generally, we can say (Matějček,1995:138) that the number of children with a serious form of dyslexia caused by the brain injury is the same in each country. On the other hand, the number of children suffering from various minor disorders depends more on other factors typical for the mother tongue of a particular country. These are, for example, the complicacy of the language structure and its orthography. The more complicated the language is the more transparent the problems are. In addition, a variety of light dyslexia is also influenced by the fact how the needs of dyslexic children are reflected in the methodology of reading and writing in the country. In my opinion, its lightest forms could be overcome by appropriate techniques that are used at the very beginning of teaching reading and writing.

According to Matějček (1995:139), the research conducted in the Czech Republic in 1970's showed that about 2 % of Czech school-aged children had lighter or serious form of dyslexia. Since the knowledge of the causes of dyslexia and techniques of testing dyslexia is still developing, today's experts are able to recognise even more dyslexic children at schools. The Consultancy Centres register about 3 % of all pupils. Yet there are still many children who did not undergo the tests for dyslexia and they have reading problems. These children can be found in almost all classes. It means that the real number of dyslexic children is even bigger. This number forces the pedagogues to change their teaching strategies so that they respect the needs of dyslexic children and adapt their classroom activities accordingly.

1.2.3 Change of the approach towards dyslexic children

1960's experts started to investigate why the competence of some children at speaking and writing is so discrepant. They tried to find the causes of this fact and they wanted to help these children to overcome their problems. An initial step towards finding some solutions was the decision to place these children to special classes in which teaching should be modified according to the needs of the dyslexic children. As Matějček (1995:220) reports, the first specialised class for dyslexic children was opened in Brno and the others followed soon afterwards. In 1971, the first grade of a specialized primary school was established in Karlovy Vary. In these classes, methods modified according to the dyslexic children's needs were used.

The establishment of the specialized classes was followed by other steps connected with conditions and rules for teaching dyslexic children. First of all, the Ministry of Education published the directions (1972) that specify the teaching/learning conditions in specialized classes. They said that there would be maximum fifteen children in one class. The timetable of the special class included more lessons of writing and reading and also lessons of individual corrective care. The program of majority of subjects remained the same as in other classes. However, the teacher had the authority to modify the program according to the immediate needs of the learners. The main focus was laid on modification of Czech language teaching. If needed, the teacher was allowed to modify the methods and procedures in teaching. Even the subject matter could be divided by the teacher differently from the state curriculum for an adequate year-class.

(Unfortunately, at the end of studies, the children were expected to meet the requirements of the ordinary curriculum, which often made the modifications more difficult. When the teacher decided to spend more time on acquisition of one part of the syllabus, it was necessary for them to go through another part faster than usual. In my point of view, it made those decisions disadvantageous.) Certain autonomy of the teacher in taking decisions was limited by negotiations with experts from the Consultancy Centre. The directions of the Ministry of Education did not specify any special conditions for teaching foreign languages. However, I think it was understood that the same modifications referring to the Czech language could have been used also in foreign language lessons.

The effect of the special classes cannot be seen only in respecting the learning needs of dyslexic children. As Zelinková (1990) reports, dyslexic children attending ordinary classes suffer from being less successful than their schoolmates. Even if the teachers differentiate their teaching to match the needs of all their pupils, their special approach can make the dyslexic children feel inferior. On the other hand, in the special class, children with similar problems meet and thus can feel equal. This helps to encourage their self-esteem, which is necessary for healthy development of their personality. Also, the teacher who teaches in the special class is usually experienced and well qualified for teaching these pupils. In addition, the number of children in dyslexic class is lower. Therefore, it is easier for the teacher to provide with more individual approach to his/her pupils. Even if there is quite a frequent opinion that the dyslexic pupils feel separated from other children and thus inferior in special classes, and that motivation and competition with other ordinary schoolmates is missing, this feeling is usually outweighed by the positive effects of this decisions.

However, the common trend does not support the existence of special classes. Since there are no special classes at secondary schools, the transition from a special primary class to an ordinary secondary school is very difficult for the pupils. Also, the tendency of our society is to integrate all the people (it does not matter if they are physically handicapped or if they have just some learning difficulties) to prepare them for their future coexistence. That is why the teachers, especially foreign language teachers, should be well-informed how to facilitate learning of all their pupils.

1.2.4 Problems of dyslexic children

1.2.4.1 Reading

The biggest problems of dyslexic children during language learning appear when they are asked to read.

In general, pupils learn to read by steps. Frith (1985) divides “early literacy” into three phases: a logographic phase (when the child “recognizes written words that he/she has encountered in spoken language, he/she makes use of visual recognition of overall word patterns, just as he/she recognizes words with significance for him” (Ott, 1997:54); an alphabetic phase (when the child “begins to understand the relationship between the sound of words and the letters used to represent those sounds”); and an orthographic phase (the child “automatically recognizes the word and he/she uses cues and context to help themselves”) (ibid).

Majority of pupils do not realize these stages since they last just for a very short time. On the contrary, difficulties of dyslexic pupils are caused by the need of much longer time for all three phases described above.

The difficulties in reading abilities, caused by an inadequate grasp of the phases mentioned above, can manifest, according to Young and Tyre (1983:67), in two levels: Surface Structure Factors and Deep Structure Factors. These factors “prevent a child from gaining meaning from print”. The Surface Structure Factors are, for example, difficulties with spatial orientation of print, poor short-term memory for sequences, attentional difficulties, etc. These factors make it difficult for a child to focus on his/her task.

Among The Deep Structure Factors, poor ability to name and categorize objects, inadequate knowledge of word meanings, and syntax may be included (ibid).

All these difficulties with reading manifest in the following aspects:

The pupil:

- reads in a staccato-like way, with little expression and with little understanding of what he/she is reading
- loses his place when reading
- needs to use his/her finger to keep the place
- misreads simple, familiar words (such as “a” for “and”)
- omits word endings

- confuses words of similar appearance
- omits syllables
- truncates letters in a word
- adds letters to words
- tends to look at the initial letters of the word and guess the rest
- makes bizarre guesses at words
- reads the word correctly on one line and then misreads the same word on the next line
- reverses whole words
- inverts letters
- reverses letters
- omits letters from words (Ott, 1997:60).

The effort to get the meaning and the constant lack of time to complete the task reflect in tiredness of reading that leads to child's inattention and confusion. As a result, the pupil fails to understand the text.

All these problems multiply when dyslexic children are to read in a foreign language, i.e. the English language.

There is an apparent difference between a written form of the Czech language and English. As Pechancová and Smrčková (2000) claim, while learning reading in Czech, pupils create words by combining independent letters, and consequently syllables. In English, this technique cannot be used. The reason is that the graphic form of the word does not agree with the phonemic form and thus pupils cannot compose the words of letters in the same pattern as in their mother tongue.

Although techniques that would help dyslexic children improve their reading skills are not the focus of this diploma thesis, they may show certain ways and tactics to help these children even during testing.

When reading in English, it is easier for a dyslexic pupil to remember the pronunciation of a complete word than to decompose the word and derive its pronunciation from the elements of the word. This is the reason why Chall (1983) and Adams (1990) recommend a "global method" for teaching reading to dyslexic children. It is based on recognition and reading of complete words (firstly, the pronunciation

and the meaning of a new word is presented with a picture, and then, the words are used in sentences).

Visuals (i.e. video, diagrams, charts, pictures, objects, models...) play a very important role in this method. They help pupils to realise the connection between written words and real things and thus to understand the meaning and, consequently, to remember the word.

Visuals are connected also with another method – a multi-sensory approach. This technique requires the pupils to use all their senses to absorb new words in order to recognize them later. The child should not only see and hear the word, he/she should also touch it (i.e. the cubes with individual letters). If it is possible, we should let him/her also smell it (food, flowers).

Halámková (1997) recommends a method called A.R.R.O.W (The Aural-Read-Respond-Oral-Written Technique). This technique aims to help pupils to hear their “self-voice echo” and, followingly, to remember the sound of new words. In the final stage, pupils write the words. Pechancová & Smrčková add that “it improves listening skill, short-term memory, pronunciation, accuracy and fluency of reading in connection with understanding of the text” (2000:20).

Another means that facilitates dyslexic pupils’ reading is using of a “target box”. It is a hole of a rectangular shape in the sheet of paper. By pulling the target box on the text we make the child concentrate on the word we want him/her to read.

Even if those techniques cannot be applied in testing procedures, they indicate the dyslexic children’s difficulties in reading that the teacher should take into account while preparing a test.

1.2.4.2 Writing

Reading is not the only area of difficulty of the dyslexic children. They have problems even in writing. Krupska and McKlein (1996) state that dyslexic pupils have hardships mainly with note taking (that is caused by difficulties when writing and listening simultaneously), sentence structure, and punctuation. Also, when they are asked to write a coherent text, they are not able to plan and structure the written work and they do not follow the conventions of writing transitions between ideas.

All the difficulties with writing are caused by various primary problems. Krupska and McKlein (1996:51) classify them into seven categories:

- “1. Poor handwriting,
2. Slow handwriting,
3. Limited basic spelling vocabulary,
4. Poor ability to ‘invent’ spelling,
5. Poor ability to decide on salient points,
6. Difficulties in thinking through a sentence,
7. Desire to express complex ideas with poor language skills”.

The most evident problem, at first sight, is the children’s **handwriting**. As Pollock and Waller (1994:81) claim, it can be caused by poor motor control, tension of hand or inadequate speed of writing. As a result, we can find letters of uneven size, erratic slant or strange shape. Furthermore, the space between words and letters often occurs uneven or inadequate (ibid).

Dyslexic children have problems even with tracing and copying, as well as keeping consistent use of margins.

Spelling represents another problem of dyslexic children. Pollock and Waller (1994:51-52) mention some “typical mistakes made by dyslexic people, though it would be most unusual to find all of them made by one person”. For example, “the outline or shape of a word may be similar to the correct word but some of the letters are confused” (e.g. day/dog), also some “letters may be reversed or mirrored” (e.g. b/d, p/q). It applies also to punctuation marks.

Another problem is that “the letters may be the correct ones but in the wrong order” (e.g. felt/left). Besides, “the letters used may be those whose sounds are near to the correct ones” (e.g. a/u/o). In addition, “the dyslexic person may be unaware of certain sounds, especially in blends” (e.g. pum/plum). They also “do not always realize that letters have names as well as sounds” (e.g. tm/team).

Some “words or phrases may be foreshortened or telescoped” (e.g. horsn/horizon). Moreover, “the dyslexic person may be confused over whether there should be one word or two words” (e.g. yes terday/yesterday).

The last point is that “the hand does not always automatically do what the brain intends. A dyslexic person may be writing, for instance, “king”, but having started the curve of the “g”, his/her hand takes the line up instead of down and instead of king he/she has unwittingly written kind” (ibid). It means that even physical factors make writing more difficult for dyslexic children.

The difficulties that dyslexic pupils have during writing make this activity more laborious. They spend much time trying to write correctly and, consequently, they do not manage to finish their tasks.

All the features mentioned above reflect in writing of dyslexic children. It does not matter whether it is done during activities that practise writing or activities in which writing is a means of completion of different tasks.

However, the spelling problems of a Czech pupil in English classes are increased by novelty of the language and by complication of spelling rules that seem to be illogical to the pupil. To acquire the spelling rules and to automate them, it is necessary to learn the language for a long time. That is why it is better to use the global method (recommending learning spelling of whole words without analysing their parts) at the beginning of the learning process. However, when we ask dyslexic pupils to remember those spellings, we encounter the problem of a poor long-term memory of these children. To overcome this trouble, Meese (1994) suggests using of lists of learnt words that learners can consult while writing.

In order to prevent dyslexic children from problems with writing, teachers can use a variety of techniques to help the children with handwriting and spelling as well. To improve the spelling competence, Crombie (1992) and Pumfrey a Reason (1955) propose a technique called “The Look-Cover-Write-And Check Routine”. In this technique, a pupil looks at the word and after that he/she tries to write it correctly. Then the word is shown again to check its spelling. If the child does not succeed, he/she repeats the process. They suggest also a method called S.O.S. (Simultaneous Oral Spelling) when a pupil spells the letters he writes and tries to read the result. This process is repeated for several days.

Problems with reading and writing do not appear only during teaching and learning the English language but also during taking tests.

1.2.5 Testing

Testing means asking questions to check the knowledge of a given issue. Considering the English language teaching, it means that the teacher elicits acquisition of the language elements and language skills. We count grammar, usage, vocabulary, and pronunciation as language elements, and we consider reading, writing, listening and speaking as language skills.

The results of testing serve teachers and pupils as a feedback to their work. The teacher gets information about students' achievements and helps him/her decide what to teach next. On the other hand, the test gives students information about what they know as well as what they should study more. It makes them be aware of their actual language competence.

There are two basic categories of language tests. The first one encompasses discrete point language tests and the second category includes integrative tests.

“Discrete point testing refers to the testing of one element at a time, item by item“ (Hughes, 1989:17). It can concentrate, for example, on one grammatical structure, or one skill. Besides, it focuses only on one aspect of a skill (e.g. productive or receptive, oral or visual). The advantage of this type of tests is a possibility to achieve validity. It means that it measures what is expected to be measured and thus pupils can get well-prepared for taking it. It is advantageous even for the teacher. He/she can easily focus on correctness of one item. Moreover, it makes the evaluation more objective and leads to a uniform grading system.

„Integrative testing, by contrast, requires the candidate to combine many language elements in the completion of a task“ (ibid). As an example, we can mention writing an essay, etc. The advantage of integrative tests is that they give pupils chances to succeed in more than one language item. For example, if a child is not good at grammar, he/she can get a good mark thanks to his/her writing ability and broadness of vocabulary used in the work. Pupils can also succeed in other spheres like an ability to make up an imaginative story, an illustration, etc. However, integrative tests are more time-consuming to grade, and less objective since there are big problems with establishing a fair grading system. Preparation during classes for these tests also requires time, a broad range of activities to be practised, etc. This is the reason why I used discrete point tests for the purpose of my project.

Discrete point tests can be either oral or written.

Oral testing concentrates mainly on evaluation of speaking skills, which is one of the most important aspects of the language. Since majority of communication happens through speaking (and it is evident that communication is the reason of language learning), it is the general aim of the foreign language learning.

However, it is very difficult to test such a broad skill. As Heaton (1988:88) states, it is “an extremely difficult skill to test, as it is far too complex a skill to permit any reliable analysis to be made for the purpose of objective testing.”

It is very complicated to separate speaking skills from listening skills. According to Heaton (1988:88), “it is impossible to hold any meaningful conversation without understanding what is being said and without making oneself understood at the same time.” Oral tests, therefore, very often focus on checking listening skills as an important part of successful communication.

Oral tests can also include such requirements that aim at using correct grammar and vocabulary as well as general knowledge.

Majority of oral tests include also a test of reading aloud. It is evident that “tests involving reading aloud are generally used when it is desired to assess pronunciation” (ibid:89).

In order to make up oral tests as objective as possible, it is necessary to set criteria of evaluation of pupils’ performance. Moreover, the teacher must consider the circumstances of testing. These circumstances include, for example, a suitable classroom climate. It helps the pupil to concentrate and not to be disturbed by stress, lack of time, insufficient preparation etc. Exclusion of all these problematic features requires good preparation from the side of the teacher and, of course, a long time.

All this makes oral testing challenging. That is why teachers use mainly written tests.

In written tests, we can test all the language elements and skills except speaking (although it is possible to test communicative competence – for example, we can simulate a natural conversation when using “chat on-line”).

I consider written tests very practical. We can test many pupils at a time and we can concentrate on all the elements of the language.

Moreover, in my opinion, written tests make testing more objective than an oral examination. The reason is that a tester has time to go through the test in his/her own pace and thus he/she has enough time to correct the mistakes. Also, the tester can correct all

the mistakes in all tests and just afterwards he/she can decide on grading rate that will be used for assessment.

Besides, the mistakes corrected in the test represent a kind of a visual proof for the teacher to defend his/her decision about the mark. When we consider the test from the pupils' point of view, they can see the mistakes they had made and they can concentrate on their correction. Later, after the further practice, they can return to the test and check whether they can correct the mistakes by themselves.

There are also other advantages of written tests. Dyslexic children can work in their own pace and they can decide which part they want to start with. Finally, after finishing their writing, they can check their work.

This is the reason why I consider written testing very convenient, and, with regard to feedback from the test, important as well. That is why I used written tests in my project.

When designing exercises of written discrete point tests, we use several techniques. These techniques can be divided into three basic categories.

The first category consists of techniques that provide learners with possible answers. The pupils' task is to find the suitable one. Among this kind of task types we count a multiple choice (where pupils choose only one correct answer from the list of possibilities), and matching activities (i.e. children look for the answers that match).

As the second group of task types, we can mention the techniques that require the pupils to complete the answer (missing phrase, word or its part) by themselves. This is the aim of cloze tests, C-tests and simple completion activities.

In the third group, we place the tasks that focus on sentence structure. These are, for example, jumbled sentences and activities that require rearrangement, transformation, insertion, or combination of sentences.

In my project, I used matching, transformation, simple completion, and jumbled sentences for discrete point written testing. I concentrated on testing pupils' vocabulary and grammar because I knew that pupils were trained in these areas.

2. DESIGNING A TEST FOR DYSLLEXIC PUPILS

There is no difference between oral testing of dyslexic pupils and their non-dyslexic schoolmates. We can test their speaking and listening skills, we can concentrate even on vocabulary and grammar.

However, problems appear when we use written clues to test dyslexic children. A written text that these pupils should discuss, or written instructions that precede a speaking activity, can cause that dyslexic children do not finish the test.

The problems become even more evident when a child is asked to complete a task in which writing is required. He/she encounters not only reading difficulties, but also writing difficulties.

In order to facilitate the completing of written tests, it is necessary to modify the process of testing and the test itself to meet dyslexic pupils' needs.

2.1 Facilitating reading

Even in an English language written test in which grammar and vocabulary are tested, reading becomes the means of completing the task. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on making reading easier for dyslexic children.

Regarding the reading problems that these pupils have (already discussed in Chapter 1.2.4.1), it is crucial for the tester to concentrate on material to be read. He/she has to take into account that children read instructions, the task (the words that they work with) and finally, they re-read everything that they have written to check correctness. It means that the testees spend quite a long time on reading. Since this activity is a very challenging task for dyslexic children (leading to tiredness and possible confusion), it is necessary to facilitate it as much as possible so that dyslexic children are not hindered by reading from fulfilling the task.

2.1.1 The format of the test

One of the means of helping dyslexic pupils to read is a clear format of the test. The Board of Education for the City of Etobicoke (1987) recommends the teachers to pay special attention to the quality of white sheets of papers, the size and clarity of print and the use of diagrams and maps. Also, “adequate spacing between items in the printed instructions” (ibid) as well as in the exercises and tasks should be kept. All these details facilitate orientation in the written material, thus making dyslexic children feel comfortable to concentrate only on their tasks.

2.1.2 Instructions

Instructions are the first pieces of information that dyslexic pupils read in the test. Therefore, they play a very important role. Their aim is to guide the pupils to understand the tasks and complete the test. That is why they should be written in such a way that pupils could read them and, consequently, understand their meaning easily.

Therefore, it is essential to use the language that the pupils are familiar with (each new word may cause problems of misunderstanding the instructions).

Besides, to help pupils to concentrate on the main points of the instructions, it is good to highlight the key words by underlining them or by using bold letters.

To make sure that the children understand the task, Meese (1994) recommends asking the pupils to “verbalize the necessary steps for assignment completion”. It means that the teacher can ask the children to briefly explain in their own words what they are to do in the exercise.

To make the instructions even clearer, the experts propose using examples that illustrate the task. The examples minimize problems with understanding the meaning of the instructions very much because they demonstrate what the pupils are to do.

Finally, it is also appropriate to use pictures and diagrams to evoke visual associations with the wording of the instructions.

Instructions are needed even in tests designed for absolute beginners in the foreign language teaching. In this case, the tester must consider if instructions written in English are appropriate. If they are beyond the scope of pupils’ knowledge, they do not suit to the

needed purpose. Accordingly, it is recommended to weigh the usage of the Czech language.

2.1.3 The task

Another piece of reading appears when dyslexic children start to work on the task. To minimize reading difficulties, it is necessary to limit the amount of reading as much as possible. For example, we can use simple structures or individual words instead of whole sentences. Obviously, even the language used in exercises must correspond to the level of pupils and there should not be any unfamiliar expressions that would disturb the pupil's attention.

2.1.4 Checking the work

The final stage of taking tests represents individual checking of correctness of the tasks. Since pupils re-read the whole test, it is the longest piece of reading during the process of test taking. Yet it is evident that pupils are tired after completing the tasks. They need even longer time to read the text and to understand what they read. If we want to make this stage purposeful, i.e. to let pupils correct their mistakes, we should not impede reading by making the test too long. Dyslexic pupils have problems with long-term concentration. Therefore, only short tests guarantee the pupils' full concentration for everything that they are to do.

2.2 Facilitating writing

Reading problems are very closely connected to writing difficulties. Writing represents the means of completing grammar and vocabulary tests. Writing difficulties resulting from dyslexia can be minimized by considering several factors.

2.2.1 Time

As it was mentioned in the previous chapters, writing is a time consuming task for dyslexic pupils. The Board of Education for the City of Etobicoke (1987) specifies that it is essential to extend the time limit for sitting for a test not to penalize slow writers. Since it is very difficult to establish a time limit that would suit the needs of all the pupils, it is better to set different time paces according to the individual pupils' needs.

2.2.2 The amount of writing

Writing does not require from dyslexic pupils much time only: since they have problems with spelling, handwriting and structuring their written work, it demands their special concentration and effort. Children could consider writing as a means for completing tasks to be as difficult as the language issues that are tested; it could be even harder for them! This is the reason why they become tired very soon and they cannot focus enough attention on their task. Accordingly, to make sure that the results of the test correspond to the pupil's actual knowledge of a given language item, it is necessary to limit the amount of writing.

2.2.3 Task types

The easiest way to reduce the amount of writing in the test is to choose the types of exercises that focus mainly on ticking or circling the required answer instead of writing sentences. In these exercises, pupils are given possible answers. Their task is only to read them and to choose the correct one. In this way, we prevent them from having problems with laborious handwriting and complicated spelling.

In accordance with this opinion, Meese (1994) suggests using multiple-choice items, matching items or a short answer tasks with a list of possible answers. Additionally, she encourages the teachers to ask the pupils to fill in true/false exercises. If a test concentrates on the sentence structure, she recommends asking the pupils to re-arrange the sentence.

However, testing is only one of many stages in teaching/learning process of the English language. As in other subjects, this stage is preceded by an appropriate

presentation of the issue, its practice, and consequent preparation for the test. Suitable preparation is essential for the success in test taking. It does not apply only to dyslexic pupils, it concerns all the children.

2.3 Preparation for the test

2.3.1 Establishing a routine in the classroom

In order to prepare the pupils for taking a test, it is necessary to maintain suitable pedagogical conditions in the classroom. Zelinková (1994) intitles these conditions as “the principle ‘SIR’ ”. The principle includes a need of the suitable social climate (it means agreeable atmosphere that helps the pupils to absorb the language so that they are not stressed when taking the test), informativeness of pedagogical evaluation (i.e. evaluation that shows accurately the progress of the pupil and and points at problems at the same time – leading to pupils’ being aware of their language competence), and reflectivity of the pupil and the teacher (an appropriate reaction to the actual situation in the class – e.g. teacher’s approval, repetition of the grammatical rule, pupil’s questions, etc.). These factors lead to establishing a routine in the classroom that can help create such an atmosphere that would facilitate the work of the pupils with specific learning difficulties. Moreover, it can make test taking a usual part of language teaching without negative influence of intruders such as stress, fear or uncertainty.

This routine can also be understood as a regular system used in the teaching/learning process. As a basic feature of this system, Zelinková (ibid) names “mastery learning”. She explains this strategy as a situation when a teacher is asked to modify his/her teaching methods to the needs of his/her pupils so that they can acquire the subject matter. Also, the teacher should give the pupils the time that they need to acquire the knowledge. With regard to dyslexic pupils, it means that the teacher must modify the time given to his/her pupils so that they could acquire the language. Additionally, the tasks on which the language is practised should suit the needs of dyslexic children.

Further, the routine should be established also in testing. Experts agree on the necessity of frequent testing in language teaching so that the teachers can check how much the pupils acquire from the language. When speaking about dyslexic children, it is even more urgent that the teacher should elicit very often if the pupils have made any progress. The aim of this eliciting is also to verify whether the teacher’s modifications

of teaching suit the needs of dyslexic pupils. Additionally, dyslexic pupils need to feel that they make some progress (even more than other children) not to lose their motivation for learning.

On the other hand, progress in the pupils' language acquisition can lead the teacher to make the following test a little bit more complex.

Besides establishing favourable atmosphere during testing, it is necessary for the teacher to eliminate intruders that would make the results of the test less valuable. One of the most significant intruders is nervousity. It can be caused by two factors. Firstly, the pupils are not certain with their knowledge, or, they cannot cope with the test format. Consequently, the pupils cannot concentrate and their performance does not correspond to their actual knowledge.

In order to eliminate pupils' worries and thus provide them with prompts which would really show what the pupils know, it is necessary to prepare the pupils for the test by means of pretesting activities.

2.3.2 Pretesting activities

According to Meese (1994), it is advantageous for teachers of dyslexic pupils to use a "test-study-test method". Meese suggests using a certain mock test, called "pretest". The aim of this test is to train pupils in the format of the test. Moreover, it helps the pupils to review different areas of language so that they would be ready for the following test. A pretest is a very effective source of information even for the teacher. He/she can see what difficulties his/her pupils have and, consequently, what should be the focus of the next practice. The pretest must not be marked. However, the teacher has to correct the pretest to show the pupils what mistakes they made. Afterwards, the items that were proved to be difficult for the pupils should be practised. When the teacher considers the pupils being ready for a "real" test, he/she can design the test. The task types and the language focus should correspond to the pretest. However, if the teacher realizes that something was wrong in the pretest, it should reflect in the change of the design of the "real" test.

Results of a test do not depend only on preparation but also on an ability of the teacher to apply the findings from the phase of pretesting to the format and content of the test.

2.3.3 Motivation

The last, but certainly not least factor that should be taken into consideration when designing a test is pupils' motivation. Without appropriate motivation, pupils do not feel any reason to complete the test. There are many ways to motivate pupils. Majority of pupils consider the marks to be the most effective motivation. However, it is not enough.

It is necessary to create a test that represents a kind of challenge for the pupils. It means that they need to feel that the test is demanding but, at the same time, they have to believe that thanks to their preparation they are able to complete the tasks. Tests that discourage pupils' self-confidence have no value either for students or the teacher.

Another feature that can act as a motivation factor in the test is the use of visuals, e.g. pictures. Pictures attract the pupils' attention, so the children want to complete the related tasks. Pictures also help them understand the task. Consequently, the children feel more self-confident and thus more challenged. They consider the exercises as a sort of a game that accompanies the pictures.

There is one more tool to make the pupils willing to complete the test. It is the layout of the test. If it is nice and clear, the children consider its completion less "painful" than writing answers on the paper where they can hardly orientate.

Finally, to increase motivation in test taking, it is necessary to make the test purposeful. The test must not serve only as a means of getting a mark. It should make the children find something new (e.g. to read an interesting article in which they fill in the blanks) or as a lead-in for another work (the result of the crossword puzzle showing the next theme).

3. THESIS

All the principles discussed in the previous chapters were applied in my professional project. Its aim was to prove that proper modifications of written tests that would suit the needs of dyslexic children can help these pupils show their real performance in the English language (without any negative interference issuing from the test taking procedures). Therefore, in the following part of this paper, I will describe the tests that would comply with the needs of dyslexic pupils, analyse the results obtained at one primary school, and, finally, conclude my findings.

CHAPTER 2 - PROFESSIONAL PROJECT

1. AIM OF THE PROJECT

The aim of this project was to design the tests for dyslexic children that would help the teachers judge their pupils' performance. These tests were designed to prove that dyslexic children can have good results when they are given a modified version of the test focusing on the basic knowledge of the English language that has been taught beforehand. The exercises in the tests were modified in accordance with the theoretical and the methodological principles dealing with dyslexic children's needs as they were described in the previous chapters.

2. CRITERIA FOR THE TEST PREPARATION

The findings from the theory of specific features of learning and teaching the English language to dyslexic children can be summarized in four basic points. When designing a test for these pupils, it is necessary to focus mainly on the format of the test, task types, instructions and timing.

2.1 Format of the test

The format of the test must be well-arranged to guarantee easy orientation that is necessary for a successful test completion. It means that there should be enough space, clear and big letters and all the organization must be lucid.

2.2 Tasks

The task types of the test must correspond the types used during practice of the language item (subject matter that is going to be tested as well as test skills). At the same time, they must correspond to the pupils' special demands especially on writing and reading.

The modification of tasks will aim at:

- tasks that require less amount of writing and minimum of reading
- for which clear and relevant skills are required from pupils to fulfill their aims
- tasks must contain such pieces of knowledge and skills that the children have practised properly in previous lessons and thus the validity of the test is fulfilled.

2.3 Instructions

Instructions must be clear and appropriate to the level of pupils' competence in the English language. In order to help dyslexic children to quickly and correctly understand the task, it is also recommended to use visuals and examples to demonstrate the task.

2.4 Timing

The time span for the test completion must be extended to correspond to dyslexic pupils' needs. If necessary, individual approach to tasks completion should be provided.

3. GROUP OF PUPILS

In order to test my project, I contacted one primary school in Liberec. I learnt that in that school, there were two special classes and one ordinary class in the sixth grade. I found it really advantageous to work in those two classes simultaneously to have possibility to compare the results of my project. Yet I was very surprised when I saw that the foreign languages were the subjects that were taught in two groups made as a mixture of all three classes - dyslexic and non-dyslexic children, all together. It was the only

subject taught in this way. For other subjects the pupils were separated. I was searching for some reason of this organization that seemed to me very illogical. I learnt that the children were divided into dyslexic and non-dyslexic classes just in the last school year. It seemed to the director easier to place the children in the same class for foreign language lessons to guarantee some continuity of their learning.

Before I conducted my research, I had asked the teachers from both classes about frequency of testing in their classes. The teacher of 6A told me that she gave her pupils just two overall tests in a half-year. Otherwise the pupils were examined only orally. Fortunately, in 6B the teacher prepared some tests for her pupils regularly, every week. These tests were based on grammar and vocabulary taught in previous lessons. I assumed that the pupils had been used to taking tests thus they did not feel nervous and besides, my interference in testing did not mean any changes in the teaching routine of this class. Therefore my project was tested just in one class, in 6B.

In this class, there were eighteen pupils. Eleven of them were dyslexic children, eight boys and three girls. They used the textbook Project English 1. During observations of two lessons I was searching for the methods and exercises the teacher was using in this class. I wanted to know whether the pupils were trained in activities that were used in tests and I also intended to see which activities could be used in my tests. In both lessons the teacher was just following the book. The pupils were asked to write the correct form of the verb according to the given rule, they transformed the sentences into the past simple tense and they tried to understand recordings and articles. In the end, they were asked to answer the questions concerning these recordings and texts. The teacher spent a very long time on translating English sentences from the book into Czech.

Before I started to prepare my first test, I also had asked the teacher to let me analyse the tests that she had given her pupils in past. I wanted to see how the activities corresponded to the needs of dyslexic children and, moreover, I wanted to judge the pupils' performance.

4. ANALYSIS OF THE TESTS PREPARED BY TEACHER

Three tests that I analysed focused on vocabulary and grammar. These tests consisted just of Czech-English translations.

In the first test, the pupils were to prove their knowledge of vocabulary of animals and their qualities. They were also asked to use the present simple tense. This test had two parts. In the first part, the pupils had to translate the Czech sentences and in the other part the English sentences had to be translated into Czech. I must admit that the pupils were much more successful in the second part, when translating into Czech. There was just one frequent mistake. The pupils translated the word “tail” as “tělo”. I think that this mistake was caused by the phonetic similarity of these words. When the children were asked to translate the sentences into English, there occurred many mistakes in formation of the present simple tense. The pupils confused the form of the verb in the third person singular with another form very often. It seemed that they did not understand this difference.

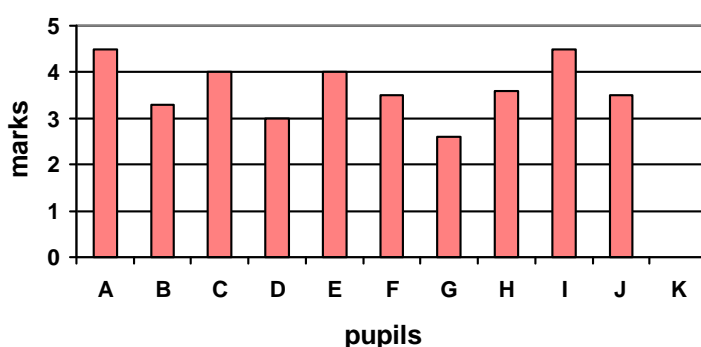
The second test focused on the same vocabulary as the previous one. In addition, the pupils were to distinguish the use of “some” and “any”. In this test, I could again see the pupils’ confusion in using present simple tense. There were also some problems with vocabulary. Yet the biggest problem was wrong use of “some” and “any”. They would have needed more practice of this item to succeed in the test.

In the third test, the pupils translated again the Czech sentences into English. The vocabulary focused on the new unit – “Doctor, doctor” and the grammatic task was to write the verbs in the past simple. Even two irregular verbs were included. At first sight I saw that the required structure was missing. In several tests I found just individual nouns at the beginning or at the end of the sentence but no verbs. Even if the past simple tense had been practiced for more than one week, the pupils were not able to use it. In many cases they did not write even the infinitive of the verb. They probably did not know it. In the words that were written in the tests, I found one very common mistake. It was spelling of the word “Davit” instead of “David”. It surprised me very much, because this name is used even in our country. Besides, this name was used also in the Czech sentences. On the other hand, there were almost no other spelling mistakes in the analysed tests.

In general, all three tests focused on translation. Since I saw that the pupils were trained mainly in different kinds of exercises (exercises from the textbook – cloze tests, matching, or oral translation of English sentences into Czech), the test did not correspond to their preparation. Moreover, translation set in this way did not suit the needs of dyslexic children at all. Therefore the results of the tests were so bad.

The marks the pupils got for these three tests are presented in the following graph no.1.

Graph no. 1 – Average marks for last three tests prepared by the teacher



Individual students are represented by letters. I did not get the results of pupil K.

The marks show that dyslexic children did not succeed very well in these tests. Its reason could be that the teacher did not respect their needs. There was no difference between the tests for dyslexic children and the rest of the class. Moreover, the children were asked to write and read a lot, which caused them problems.

The analysis of these three tests helped me to prepare the tests of my professional project. I wanted to avoid translations without any hints, exercises that required much reading and writing. Additionally, I wanted to provide the children with tests that corresponded their preparation and special needs, such as the format of the test, clear and overall instructions, and timing.

5. MY PROJECT

All the tests that I created for this class were prepared in two versions. The first one was intended for dyslexic children and the other version was created for the rest of the class. Both versions focused on the same grammar and vocabulary, however, the activities in the tests for dyslexic children differed to suit their special needs. The tests

for non-dyslexic pupils are not included in this diploma thesis since they were not the aim of my project.

5.1 Test no. 1

5.1.1 Characteristic

The first test was given to the pupils on 23th May 2002. It focused on using the past simple tense and vocabulary from Project no. 7 – Doctor, Doctor. The past simple tense had been practiced for six previous lessons. The instructions were written in English.

In the first exercise the pupils were asked to complete the past form of the verb in brackets in the sentence. They could check their understanding of the sentences on the left side of the paper where the sentences were written in Czech. Therefore, they did not have any problems with vocabulary of this exercise and they could concentrate just on the past simple tense formation.

The second exercise focused on vocabulary knowledge. The words were to be matched with the suitable sentence according to the Czech meaning. Consequently, the children did not have to think of the spelling of the words they needed. They were only asked to realise what the meaning of the given words was, to choose the suitable one and to copy it to the sentence.

In the second part of this exercise, the children were asked to use other words from the list to fit to the picture. But before doing this they should have translated an introductory sentence from Czech into English. This sentence was used several times in previous exercises (see p. 33).

5.1.2 Test analysis

While preparing this test, I used the knowledge acquired from the theoretical part of my academic research. Since I learnt that dyslexic children have problems with their slow handwriting, I tried to limit the amount of writing in the test.

I know that dyslexic children have problems also with sentence structure. It reflected mainly in the **first** exercise. As the aim of this exercise was to check the past simple acquisition, I did not want to make the task more difficult by insisting on writing

the whole sentence. That is why I gave the children all the sentence structure and I asked them to write just the grammatic form that this test was focused on. I wrote also the infinitive of the needed verb in brackets because the children were used to making past simple when seeing the infinitive or the present form of the verb.

Another feature that can cause difficulties to dyslexic children in writing is their inability to spell properly. When they are not sure about spelling of the word they need, they lose much time while thinking about it and very often they do not write anything because of fear of writing the word badly. It was the reason why I used a list of words that should have been matched to the sentences and the picture in the **second** exercise. Even if I know that also copying can sometimes be difficult for dyslexic children, this inappropriateness does not indicate the lack of knowledge that I wanted to test. It seemed to me easier for children to copy the words than to “invent” their spelling. The pupils were again given the structure.

Just before the children continued to match the words, I asked them to demonstrate how they had learnt the structure “I have got”. I inserted a Czech sentence that the pupils had to translate. It seemed to me very easy because this structure was used in the test many times before. They needed just realize it and copy it from previous sentences.

In the next part of this exercise I used the visual help of a picture. I found it advantageous to use this way of presenting the words that I was asking for because the children did not have to read anything. And as I mentioned before, reading is the biggest problem for dyslexic children. They should have matched the words from the list to the parts of a body marked in the picture.

5.1.3 Reflection

Evidently, the children were not used to following the instructions written in English. Although the language was simplified, the pupils did not understand them. My English explanation did not help them. Finally, translation into Czech offered by me was used and applied also in the further testing.

While observing pupils’ work, I noticed that they did not have any problems to complete the first exercise. They were used to this kind of task. They needed to read only the beginning of the sentence. In case of bad understanding, they could check their

comprehension in the Czech sentence. Three pupils got confused by the full infinitive of the verbs. They wrote “to” also in front of the past simple form. The reason could be their inattention and only mechanic copying of the beginning of the verb, or they did not learn the full infinitive form. This made them feel uncertain and confused and react in this way. Afterwards, when I examined the testbook and my notes from the lessons that I had seen, I had to acknowledge that they really did not use the full infinitive at all. It was my mistake to include it in the test. The results in this exercise could have been better.

In formation of the past simple form, there were two very common mistakes. The first one was forming the past simple tense of the verb “to be” as if it was a regular verb. As a result I could see the words like “bed” or “beed”. While observing the previous lessons, I saw that the teacher focused on this irregular verb. She asked me to use both past simple forms in the test. Yet since I placed it between other regular verbs, the pupils did not realise its irregularity. They would have, perhaps, written it better if I had placed it on the top or at the end of the exercise. The best way would be to separate it visually. However, then the pupils’ acquisition of the difference between regular and irregular verbs would be questionable. And it was the reason of my placing of this verb in this test.

The second very common mistake the pupils made in this exercise (all dyslexic pupils made it) was wrong spelling of the verb “stopped”. All the children forgot to double the letter “p”. Possibly, they just forgot and did not realise it. Or, that seems to me more probable, they did not understand the principle of doubling the consonants and since they have a poor spelling memory, they did not acquire this feature.

On the contrary, when completing the second exercise, the pupils got confused by the list of the words and they started to hesitate (see ex. 2 on p. 33). Even if the instructions were repeated beforehand, they were trying to find some other expressions, or they used the same word several times. A suitable solution could have been to write more detailed instructions and to give an example to this exercise (crossing one word in the list).

The following part of this exercise was to translate the introduction sentence. The pupils overlooked it very often. It must be admitted that the sentence was not marked well enough. Therefore, the pupils could skip over it. There should have been more space around and it could have been also written in a different type of script. I could have used bold italics or I could have underlined the sentence. Perhaps, larger letters would have been sufficient. Also the instructions for this sentence were missing. The verbal remark was not sufficient. Several pupils who completed this sentence made the same mistake as analysed

beforehands. They used “to” where they should have completed only present simple form of the verb.

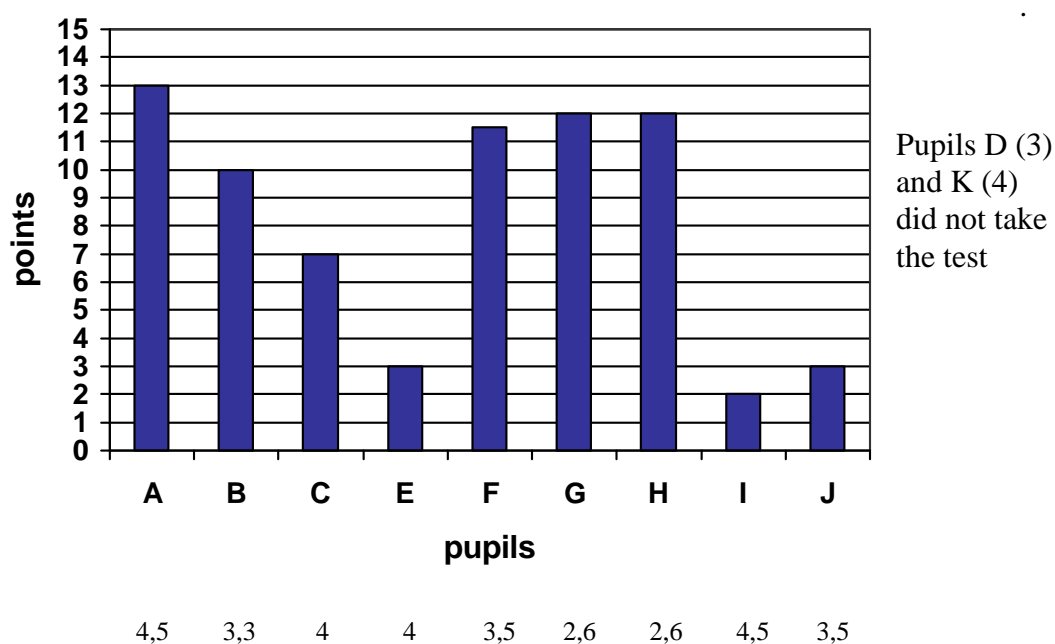
In the last part of the exercise, there were not any other frequent problems. Two students just confused the expressions “sore throat” and “stomach ache” and one boy wrote the expression “stomach ache” in a partly fonetic form – “stomak ake”. Otherwise, there were no problems. The picture helped the children to complete the task.

5.1.4 Analysis of the results of the test no. 1

Even if grading the tests was not a main criterion of the evaluation of the pupils’ success, it helped me to express the progress the children made.

To assess the pupils’ performance in this test the error-count method was used. Since the dyslexic children have problems with spelling, that is very difficult for them to overcome, the spelling mistakes were not counted to the final score. The pupils could get fifteen points in maximum. The following graph shows the points that the children scored in the test.

Graph no. 2 - Results of the test no. 1



The teacher marked the test as follows:

$$15-14 = 1$$

$$13-10 = 2$$

$$9 - 7 = 3$$

$$6 - 4 = 4$$

$$3 - 0 = 5$$

Numbers below the graph represent the average marks got for last three tests taken with the teacher.

When analysing the results of this test, I discovered that they do not correspond as a whole to the previous marks (see the graph no.1 on p. 26). The best work was done by the pupil that got the worst marks in the previous tests (prepared by their class teacher). There could be several reasons of this result. The first one is quite clear. The pupil A learnt well how to form the past simple tense. Good completion of the vocabulary exercise could be just a question of chance. Yet it is much more probable that the pupil acquired at least the passive knowledge of the vocabulary. Perhaps it was the same in the tests given to him by the teacher but he did not have the possibility to prove it, because he was asked to translate the Czech sentences into English without any clues. Also the points obtained by pupils B, F,G, and H were higher than I expected. Other pupils did not show any special difference in their performance.

The non-dyslexic rest of the class succeeded quite well in the test. One pupil got ten points, other pupils got at least twelve points. They made the same mistakes as the dyslexic pupils. They also often overlooked the translation sentence. It confirmed my thought that the layout of the test was not well prepared. In addition, they also did not write double “p” in “stopped”. This mistake was the sign of insufficient practice of this exception. Yet it is also possible that this item was practiced enough but not with respect to dyslexic pupils’ needs. However, in general, they were quite successful and the teacher was satisfied with their performance.

5.1.5 Conclusion

Even if the test was prepared so that it would respect the dyslexic children’s needs, there were several features that I should focus on more when preparing the next test.

At first, I must write the instructions in Czech because I will not have the possibility to pre-teach the pupils to follow the instructions written in English. The clear detailed instruction must be given before each exercise.

Secondly, the layout of the test must be clear to guarantee an easy orientation in the test. All the exercises should be distinctly separated to avoid overlooking of any part of the test.

Finally, this test proved that visual prompts help dyslexic children very much, thus it is recommended to use them as much as possible.

These findings were applied in the following tests.

TEST no. 1

1. Write the verb in past:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Její srdce se zastavilo. | Her heart (to stop). |
| 2. Byl nemocný. | He (to be) ill. |
| 3. Bolely ji zuby. | She (to have) a toothache. |
| 4. Potřebovali doktora. | They (to need) a doctor. |
| 5. Paní Hillová umřela. | Mrs Hill (to die). |
| 6. Byli jsme v nemocnici. | We (to be) in the hospital. |
| 7. Stuart a Annie tancovali doma. | Stuart and Annie (to dance) at home. |
| 8. Harry hrál na kytaru. | Harry (to play) the guitare. |

2. Write the right word:

cold, sore throat, flu, stomach ache, temperature, headache

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Nemám teplotu | I haven't got a..... |
| 2. Ty nemáš chřipku. | You haven't got |
| 3. Maminka nemá rýmu. | Mum hasn't got a |

OUCH! Doctor, help me, please!

- | | |
|------------|---------|
| 4. Bolí mě | I |
|------------|---------|

5.....

6.....

7.....

5.2 Test no. 2

5.2.1 Characteristic

The second test was given to the same pupils on 7th June 2002. It focused on the same grammar and vocabulary as the previous test, i.e. the past simple tense of regular and irregular verbs and vocabulary from Project no. 7 – Doctor, doctor. The children had learnt this grammar and vocabulary for more than 2 weeks between tests no. 1 and 2.

The instructions were written in Czech.

In the first exercise the pupils' task was to write the missing forms of the given verbs, either in the present simple or the past simple tense. There were no sentences, I wrote only two columns of verbs not to make the exercise more difficult by reading the words surrounding the verb.

In the second exercise I tested the pupils' knowledge of the sentence structure. The children were asked to put the words into the right order to make the correct sentence.

The last exercise focused on vocabulary knowledge. The pupils' task was to match the Czech expressions with their English equivalents. I facilitated this exercise by using a crossword puzzle where the children were asked to write the results of the matching. The clue represented the word connected with the theme of illnesses.

5.2.2 Test analysis

While I was preparing this test, I took into consideration all my findings from the test no. 1.

At first sight, the layout of the test was considerably better arranged so that the pupils could orientate quickly. Nothing could have been overlooked, there was more

space around each exercise and the instructions (written in Czech) were highlighted by the larger bold type letters.

Also the amount of writing was very low to make the test easier for dyslexic children.

In the **first exercise**, I clearly stated what should be filled in. Both columns were indicated by the Czech words describing the tense of the verbs – “přítomnost” for the present simple tense and “minulost” for the past simple tense. (With regard to the problems in test no. 1, I did not use the full infinitives of the verbs. I did not want to confuse the pupils again by the word “to”).

There were two tasks. The children had to complete the missing letters of the past simple form to the present simple forms given. The other task (see test no. 2 on p. 41) was to write the present simple form of the given past simple tense. To facilitate the completion of this exercise, I indicated the number of missing letters by dashes to anticipate the spelling problems of dyslexic pupils. They also could have checked the past simple endings that they wrote with the past simple forms written in the exercise (e.g. played/work- -).

The **second exercise** focused on the sentence structure. I divided the sentences into individual words. These sentences were familiar to the pupils because they were used many times during the practice of the past simple tense. The pupils’ task was to put the words into the right order to make the sentences grammatically correct. I did not write the capital letter at the beginning of the word that started the sentence not to help the pupils with its identification. Finally, the children were expected to write the correct sentence on the right side of the line. I considered this exercise to be quite easy.

In the **third exercise** I concentrated on the vocabulary from the Project no. 7. Again, I wrote the words that the pupils were to use in English so that the pupils would not lose time on inventing their spelling. Two columns of expressions were clearly indented so that there was enough space between them for lucid linking of the Czech and English expressions. Even if I did not write all the steps of completing the task in the instructions, the children automatically did what I expected them to do.

On the right side of this exercise I placed the crossword puzzle. This visual prompt was intended to make the final product of this exercise more interesting. Moreover, it also helped the pupils to find the right words. They could have checked if the chosen word fitted to the appropriate line of the table.

5.2.3 Reflection

Unfortunately, this test was taken only by six dyslexic children. The others, five children, were absent that day. The teacher did not ask the pupils to sit for the test after their return to school. Therefore, these are not the results of all the class, but only of this smaller group of pupils. However, I analysed them to see how my modification of the test suited the needs of the pupils who were present.

In general, the pupils did not have any big problems while taking this test. There were no questions when completing the exercises. It means, for this time, the instructions were sufficient. I just explained to the pupils that the number of dashes in the first exercise corresponds to the number of missing letters.

The first exercise seemed easy to the pupils. They were used to this kind of task – to write the past simple form to the present form and vice versa. There were no mistakes at all in completion of the past simple endings. Yet two pupils made mistakes when they wrote the present simple form of the verb “to play”. One pupil wrote “plad” and the other wrote “pley”. The reason of these mistakes could be their inattention and overwriting, or, even if it seems to me improbable, unfamiliarity with this verb. One pupil did not complete this exercise at all. I saw him when he skimmed this exercise and I thought that he would leave it for the end. Yet when he gave me the test back and this exercise was not still completed, I pointed it out and asked him why he had not done it. I thought that he had forgotten to complete it. Surprisingly, he told me that he had not known how the past simple tense is formed.

In the second exercise, some problems occurred. There was only one sentence that was correct in all tests, the second one (see test no.2 on p. 41). It was the shortest sentence that was also the least complicated. The first sentence was written by three pupils correctly but the others did not know where the indefinite article should be written. In two cases they placed it between “stomack” and “ache”. They did not realise that it is a compound noun that needs only one article at the very beginning. The last pupil wrote the words just at random (see appendix no. 1). He probably did not understand the words and the meaning of the sentence. The last sentence was written correctly by four pupils. The rest, two children, interchanged the words “were” and “we”. Perhaps, they confused the positive sentence with a question. Yet they did not write the question mark at the end

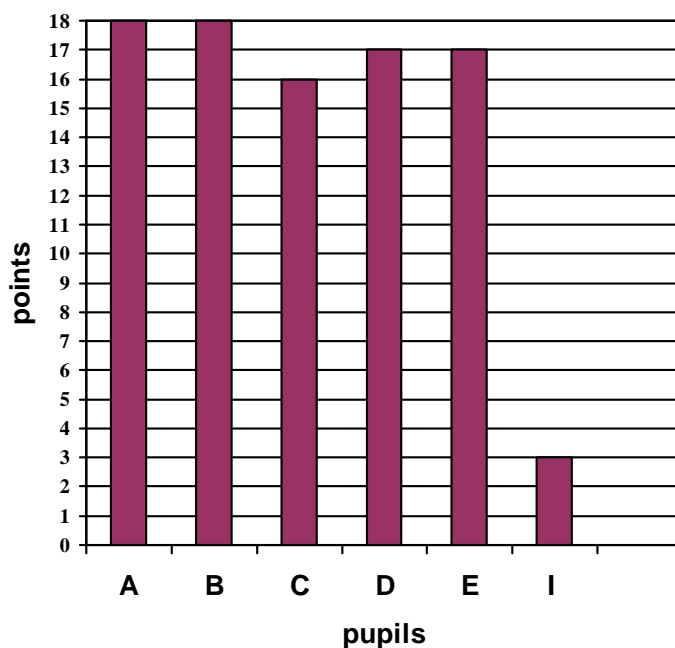
of the sentence. Another reason could be the similarity of these words. Maybe, the pupils were not able to distinguish which word is a pronoun and which one is a verb.

The last exercise was written correctly by almost all pupils. I must admit that using the visual probably facilitated this exercise very much. The pupils understood this crossword puzzle as a challenge to play a game. They wanted to show how fast they can fill in the words. I did not realise before that the pupils could complete the table just thanks to counting the letters of the given words. They did not need to know the meaning of the words. However, they proved understanding of the words by matching the Czech and English expressions. I could have given the pupils the Czech and English expressions to make the crossword puzzle incomplete. I could just write the position (the number) of the letters that was needed to get the clue to each line but not the number of letters in the word. One pupil did not take the advantage of my “extreme” help. He wrote correctly only two shortest words. They were easy to be completed without any special endeavour. Yet afterwards, he did not make any effort to complete the rest. He was not willing to solve the task and show what he knew. Moreover, he did not care even about a good mark. He did not care about the result.

5.2.4 Analysis of the results of the test no. 2

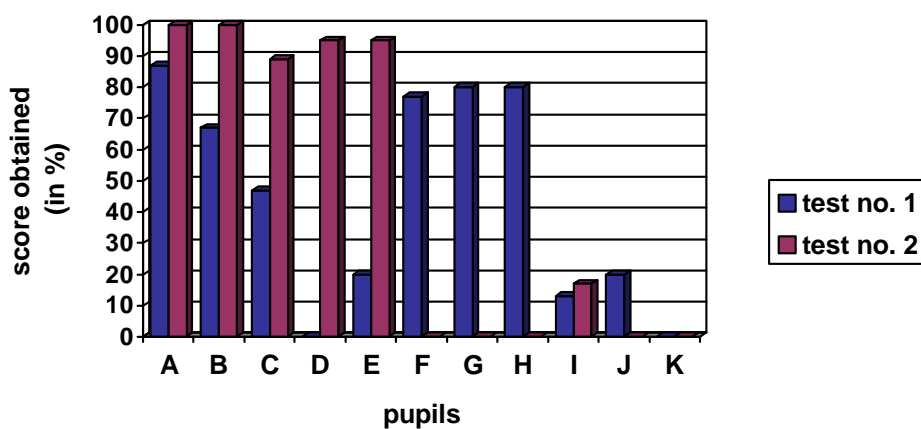
As in the previous test, I used the error-count method to assess this test. The pupils could get eighteen points in maximum. Their results are presented in the following graph. I also added the graph comparing the results of tests no. 1 and no. 2 (graph no. 4).

Graph no. 3 – Results of the test no. 2



Pupils F, G, H, J and K did not take the test.

Graph no. 4 – Comparison of the results of the tests no. 1 and no. 2



When I analysed the results of this test, I was very satisfied with the pupils' performance. It is evident that majority of pupils succeeded very well (see graph no. 3).

In order to compare these results with the previous test (see graph no. 4), I can claim that the scores are much higher than before. The reason was probably the exercises that suited well the needs of these children. On the other hand, this test was easier for the pupils because they got used to this type of activities.

In the first exercise, the children could see the examples of the present simple and also of the past simple tense. These verbs could lead them to realise its formation (in a better case) or they could only copy it.

In the second exercise, the children proved that they still have problems with the sentence structure. The test showed that pupils should be trained in using (grammar and vocabulary) in a simple context to let the children hear the structure many times and thereby to absorb it.

The third exercise focused on vocabulary. The pupils were given all the vocabulary that they needed, as in the test no. 1, but this time, they used it more effectively. The reason of this efficiency was, probably, better acquisition of the vocabulary caused by longer practice. Additionally, the usage of the visual worked as a motivation factor and at the same time, it represented a clue for the task. Besides, the clear and sufficient instructions that guided the pupils to complete the exercises played a very important role.

Finally, I admit that there was one pupil (pupil "I") that still did not show any progress (see his test no. 2 in appendix no.1). No matter how the task was easy or difficult, the child did not feel motivated to make any effort to perform his best. The teacher told me that this pupil did not want to learn English at all. He did not care about his school results. In addition, he felt extraordinary when he was considered to be the worst of all. I think that the first step to overcome his negative attitude should be finding out the reason that leads the child to behave in this way. At the moment when the teacher is well informed about the situation, he/she can make the pupil change his approach towards school. Just after this change, the teacher can try to improve the child's attitude towards language teaching.

5.2.5 Conclusion

In the test no. 2 I verified how important the instructions were. Firstly, the students could focus on the given task (they did not get confused and delayed by incorrectness and imprecision of the instructions) and secondly, the instructions guided the pupils clearly to complete the exercises and thus made the task easier. As a result, both factors mentioned above gave the pupils the confidence that is necessary for the children's best performance while taking the test.

Also the clear layout helped the pupils to orientate well in the test and complete all the exercises.

It has been also proved that it is difficult to meet all the pupils' needs. Even if the modification of the test based on the previous investigation helped majority of pupils to complete the test, certain pupils still demonstrate some problems.

In terms of problems the dyslexic children have with reading and writing, the test respected them in the way that the amount of reading and writing was limited. The pupils were also given the list of words that they were to use.

Another factor that helped the pupils to complete the test was copying the past simple tense formation. While copying the endings of the given verbs, the children could realize the system of the past simple tense formation. I consider this work one of the stages of the language acquisition.

These findings imply that the tester cannot disregard preparation of instructions that must be clear and explicit. Moreover, the layout of the test plays a very important role – it facilitates completion of the test. Yet one aspect of creating a test was ignored when preparing this test. It was proved that examples were missing. It would help the pupils very much to complete the second exercise.

All findings described in this part were used while preparing another test, test no. 3.

TEST no. 2

1. Napiš chybějící tvar slovesa v přítomném nebo minulém čase:

přítomnost	minulost
like	l i k - -
-----	played
work	w o r k - -
-----	stopped
live	l i v - -
need	n e e d - -
die	d i e -

2. Seřad' slova tak, aby věta dávala smysl:

Bolelo mě břicho. ache / had / stomach / I / a

Byl jsem nemocný. I / ill / was

Byli jsme doma. at / were / we / home

3. Dopln křížovku (ch je rozděleno do dvou políček):

1. bolest hlavy	sore throat
2. nachlazení	flu
3. bolest krku	headache
4. teplota	toothache
5. zubař	cold
6. srdce	temperature
7. bolest zubů	dentist
8. chřipka	heart

5.3 Test no. 3

5.3.1 Characteristic

The third test was given to the pupils one week after the test no. 2, on 14th June 2002. It focused on the past simple tense and its use in questions. The questions had been practiced in the class for two previous weeks. Additionally, the knowledge of vocabulary from the Project no. 7 was tested.

The instructions were again written in Czech.

In the first exercise I concentrated on revision of the past simple tense. The pupils were supposed to change the given sentences (written in the present simple tense) into the past simple.

The second exercise was designed to test formation of questions in the past. The children's task was to form questions to the sentences written in the past simple.

The last exercise tested the pupils' vocabulary. The children were asked to put the letters into the correct order and match the words with their Czech meanings.

5.3.2 Test analysis

Like in the previous test no. 2, I tried to make the test as clearly organized as possible in order to facilitate the pupils' orientation. I emboldened and enlarged the font of the instructions and I also visually distinguished the exercises. Even the instructions were understandable, there were no questions when the pupils were completing the test.

In the **first exercise** the children were to write the sentences in the past. Precisely, they were supposed to complete the missing verbs in the sentences. To anticipate spelling mistakes and wasting time, I wrote the rest of the sentences. It also helped the pupils to focus just on the grammatical task. Since the pupils had practiced the past simple tense for a very long time and they succeeded very well in the test no. 2, I did not consider giving them any hints to do this exercise necessary. I only wrote both irregular verbs together at the beginning of the exercise and just afterwards I mentioned the regular verbs (see test no. 3 on p. 49).

The **second exercise** was prepared to check the pupils' comprehension of the new structure - forming questions in the past using "did". In order to indicate what questions I was asking for (yes/no questions, not open questions). I used the example in Czech. I considered it clearer. I thought that writing an English question would not guarantee sufficient comprehension of the kind of question that was required. I did not want to give an example of English question structure. I knew that the pupils had learned its formation and use for a long time and I thought that it would facilitate the task too much. The pupils could have only copied its formation from the example. To focus the pupils' attention on the part of the sentence that I expected them to ask about, I underlined this part in the example.

The statement was already written in the past. In the question, there was only the beginning missing (the underlined part in the example), the rest was completed.

In the **third exercise** I wanted to test the pupils' acquisition of vocabulary. I used the individual words, not the sentences, not to force the dyslexic pupils to read. To make the exercise more attractive for them, I prepared a puzzle. I divided the words into the individual letters and wrote them in a wrong order. The children had to discover what the letters meant. To facilitate this task, I wrote the Czech equivalents on the right side of the paper. These words made the exercise more transparent. There were two ways of doing this task. At first, the pupils could decode the words, write them down and afterwards, they could link the result to the Czech meaning. Yet this task could be too

difficult for some pupils. That is why they also had another possibility. The ones who had learnt vocabulary well, could proceed from the other side. They could look at the Czech words that they were given and immediately, they could write the English equivalents (see p. 38). Then, they could just try to find the set of letters that corresponded to their words, or, which was even easier, they could just count the number of letters from the first column (see test no.3 on p. 49) and link the suitable set to the English word that they had already written.

5.3.3 Reflection

Generally speaking, I noticed some nervousity in the class while the pupils were taking this test, mainly at the beginning, when I distributed the test and I read the instructions aloud. Immediately, I asked if they understood what their tasks were. They answered that there was no problem with comprehension. (Probably, my instructions were sufficient again.) Yet I saw the pupils hesitate very much. Not just the dyslexic children, even the rest of the class.

The results of the first exercise (that seemed to me quite easy) were very surprising. Since the pupils proved in the previous test (see the results of the test no. 2 on p. 38), that they acquired the formation of the past simple tense perfectly I did not expect any problems in this exercise. Yet the opposite was true. There was only one dyslexic pupil who wrote it correctly (he made only one spelling mistake). Two other children wrote the first verb well (see test no. 3 on p. 49), the others tried to form the past simple tense by adding the “ed” ending to the irregular verb. I realised that in the tests they were usually given the infinitive of the verb “to be”. They, probably, did not connect the present simple form with this verb and they reacted as if they wrote the regular verb. As a result, I found the verbs like “amed” and “amd”. Another verb was “have got” that should have been transformed into “had”, but majority of pupils wrote “haved”. Its reason was possibly the same as in the first sentence. The next verb was written in the third person form “works”. The “s” at the end of the verb confused the children in the way that they wrote “worksed” instead of “worked”. The easiest verb was the verb “play”. Two pupils wrote “playd” as a past simple tense, but the rest of the class wrote it correctly. I was wondering about the reason of unsuccess of this exercise in this class. I witnessed the same type of exercise several times during the past simple tense practice.

Since the pupils made mistakes, they were asked to transform some other sentences. They were drilling it almost the whole lesson. Finally, they did not make any mistakes. Yet I realised that these exercises were usually oral, without any visual support. At the moment, when the pupils saw these “disturbing features “ (as an “s” at the end of the verb) in front of them on the paper, they got confused and started to look for the reason of their use. Perhaps, they did not realise its exceptional appearance in the present simple tense and they copied it to be sure that they had not forgotten anything.

However, the biggest problem of this test was the exercise no. 2. Even if the pupils had practiced the formation of questions for more than five lessons on variety of exercises, they did not know at all how to form questions in the past. It surprised me because I knew that they were used to the same type of the exercise as in the test. None of all fourteen pupils of this class who took this test, formed even one correct question. Four non-dyslexic children just changed the word order in the sentence to put the verb at the beginning. Otherwise, they made the same mistakes as the dyslexic children. There was only one child that used the word “did”. It was one dyslexic boy. (see appendix no. 2). Unfortunately, he used it after a pronoun and he also added the verb in the past simple form. Four dyslexic pupils wrote the verbs in the present. (Perhaps, they remembered that there should be done some change in the tense. At least, they remembered one part of question formation. Unfortunately, they did not acquire the rest.) The other three pupils tried to form the question by adding the “ed” ending to the past simple form of the verbs (see appendix no.3).

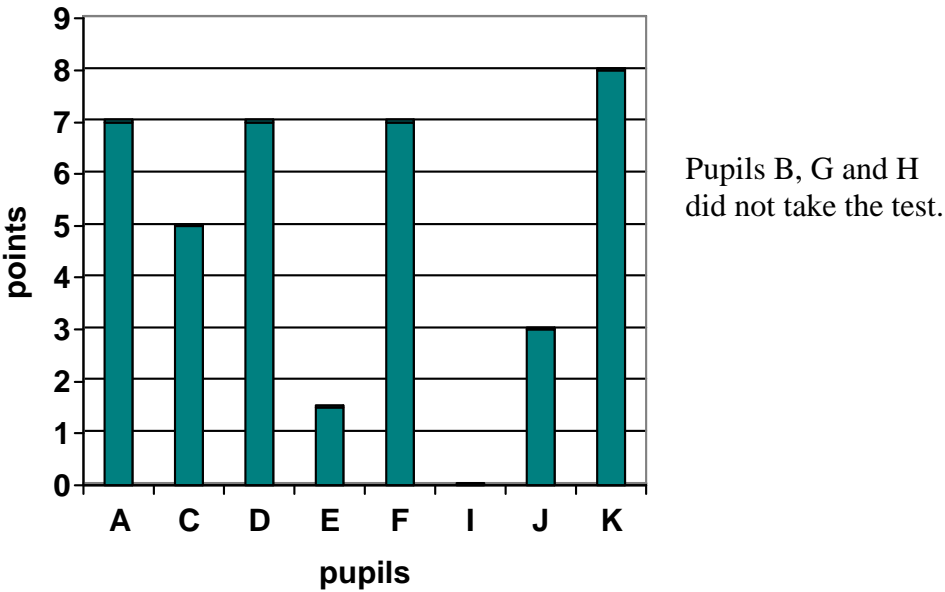
The best results were achieved in the last exercise. Five dyslexic children did not make any mistake. One pupil made just a spelling mistake in the word “heart” (he wrote “heatr”). Another child put the letters in the random order so that the words did not make any sense and connected them with the Czech words. The last pupil did not write any English word, he only put the Czech words in a different, probably random order (see appendix no. 4).

5.3.4 Analysis of the results of the test no. 3

To assess this test, I used again the error-count method. Since the second exercise was not done well by anybody, I concluded that this structure had not been practised

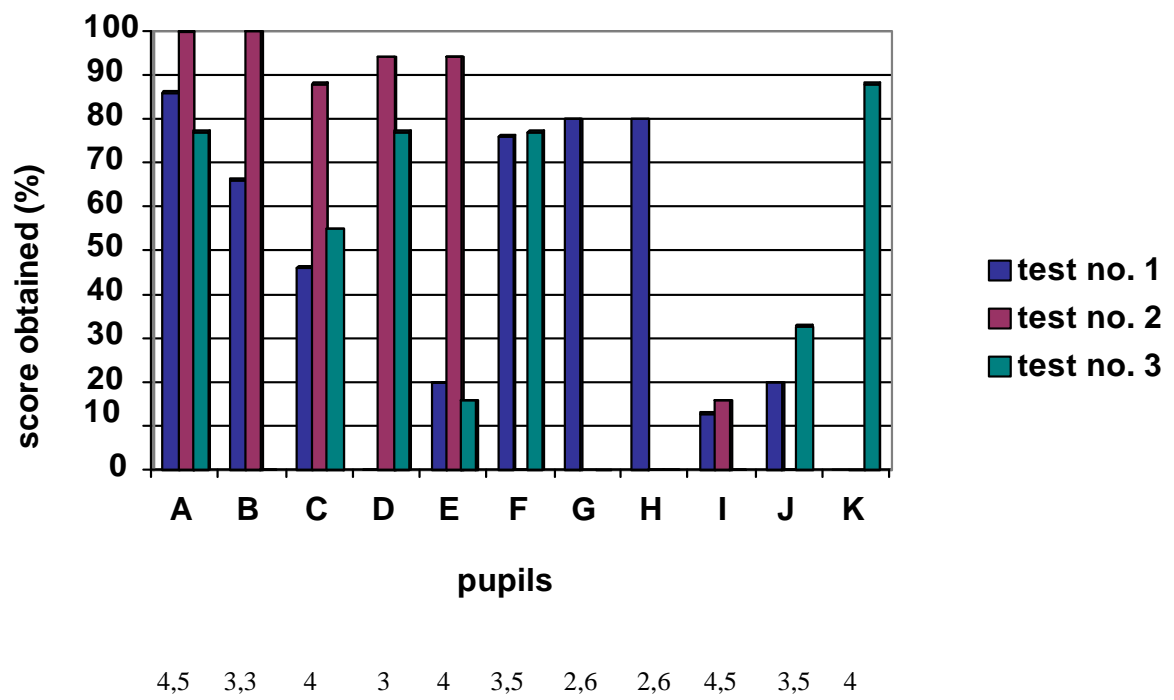
enough to be tested and therefore, the pupils did not understand its formation. It was the reason why I did not assess the completion of the second exercise. To the final score I included only the results of the first and the third exercise. The pupils could get nine points in maximum. If I counted all three exercises, the results would be the same, just the maximum of points would be thirteen. The results of the individual students are presented in the following graph no. 5.

Graph no. 5 – Results of the test no. 3



In the next graph, no. 6, the results of all three test are compared.

Graph no. 6 – Comparison of the results of the tests no. 1, 2 and 3



The numbers below the Graph no. 6 represent the average mark that the pupils got from their teacher before I started to prepare the tests for them.

In order to analyse the results of the test no. 3, I must claim that they are not as good as I expected. Four pupils succeeded very well, one pupil showed sufficient performance but the last three pupils J, E and I failed. The worst result was achieved by the pupil I, the same pupil as in the previous tests. This boy still did not show any effort or will to have good results.

5.3.5 Conclusion

When comparing the results of the last two tests, I discovered that they were much worse in the test no. 3, although I had made an effort to design the test that would meet the dyslexic children's needs. I wrote simple and clear instructions, I arranged the test well and I also required just limited amount of reading and writing. Yet I did not not give the pupils so many prompts as in the previous tests because I expected them to be ready for these tasks.

If I concentrated on the first exercise, I thought that the pupils had acquired the past simple tense after such a long time of practice and mainly, after such a successful test no. 2. It would be better if I used an example to guide the pupils to complete the exercise. I could also write the regular and irregular verbs separately, not to cause confusion of pupils.

The exercise no. 2 was given to the pupils too early. Even if the class teacher asked me to test the question formation, the pupils did not absorb this structure enough to use it without any hints. It would, probably, be more appropriate to give them some multiple choice exercise or a jumbled sentence to put the words into the correct order. They would see the parts of the structure and they would, possibly, be able to use it correctly.

Also the example written in Czech did not pull its weight. On one hand, the pupils recognized what kind of question they were required to use. Yet it would be better to use another lexical verb in the example. The verb "to be" is specific in terms of forming tenses. Its question structure differs from other verbs too much. On the other hand, the pupils needed also an example of the English question structure. If I created another

test for this class, I would use an example that would demonstrate even the question formation.

Moreover, asking the pupils to use the verb “do” as a lexical verb was too difficult. The pupils need to acquire the usage of “do” as a modal verb and lexical verb individually at first. Just later, when we are sure that they do it automatically, we can ask them to combine it. In this case, this stage was not reached yet.

TEST no. 3

1. Přepiš tyto věty do minulosti:

- a) I am ill. I ill.
b) We have got a toothache. We a toothache.
c) He works in the afternoon. He in the afternoon.
d) They play football in the garden. They football in the garden.

2. Napiš otázky (v minulém čase) na tyto odpovědi:

Příklad: Byl jsem včera doma. Byl jsi včera doma?

- a) I went to school in the morning. to school in the morning?
b) He started to write the letter. to write the letter?
c) I stopped at 5 o'clock. at five o'clock?
d) You did my homework. my homework?

3. Rozlušti a přiřaď tato slova:

- | | | |
|--------------------|-------|---------------|
| a) C O R D T O | | 1) srdce |
| b) N E C I M D I E | | 2) chřipka |
| c) E L F U | | 3) lékař |
| d) D L C O | | 4) léky |
| e) T A H E R | | 5) nachlazení |

CHAPTER 3 – CONCLUSION

In order to test dyslexic children's performance in the English language, it is necessary to design the test so that it respects all the needs of dyslexic pupils. However, it is also crucial to modify the teaching/learning process to minimize obstacles that make dyslexic pupils' learning more difficult. All the problems that dyslexic children have to cope with occur mainly in reading and, consequently, in writing, which are unescapable parts of any written test.

1. READING

Since reading represents a big trouble for dyslexic children, a tester should realize what he/she is going to test. If a test does not focus on reading itself (its conditions were described in Chapter 1.2.5.1), the pupil should be asked to read as little as possible. Yet there are several inevitable elements that need to be read in each test.

At first, it is necessary to mention instructions. Regarding dyslexic children's needs, a tester must create instructions that are clear and understandable. In principle, the language and terminology used should be familiar to the pupils. If the children are not trained in quick decoding directions written in English, they cannot be expected to follow them in the test. Then they cannot fulfill the task properly. In this case, it is recommended to use instructions written in Czech.

This opinion was confirmed in the research that I conducted. It was proved that even if I tried to simplify the language very much, the children did not understand because they were not used to reading instructions written in English. As a result, they did not understand their task and they got confused. Neither the immediate reformulation of instructions nor translation into Czech helped the pupils. All this reflected in their bad results. However, when I wrote instructions in Czech and checked the comprehension by asking the children to explain the basic steps of the exercise, they did not have any problems to complete the task.

It was also proved that using an example as a part of instructions is effective. The example must demonstrate precisely the task. Any modifications of the example (Czech example, different time reference, etc.) can cause confusion.

Besides instructions, pupils have to read the task itself, no matter whether it consists of individual words or whole sentences. In general, a few principles have to be respected during the preparation of the test tasks. The amount of reading should be reduced, the sentences must not be too complicated and the language applied must be at the same level as the pupils' language proficiency. To facilitate the pupils' understanding of the exercise, it is also appropriate to use some hints and visuals.

In all three tests reading was limited. I used very simple sentences, or, when the task permitted it, only words or individual letters. The pupils were asked to complete the words, to put the letters or the words into the right order.

In the test no. 2 pupils were asked to write the verbs in the past simple tense. Instead of sentences that might have been too difficult for the pupils to read, I decided to use only individual verbs in the present simple or past simple tense (e.g. like – lik - -, - - - - played). It was clear that this simplification helped the learners to fulfill the task. They immediately started to fill in the missing words or letters. When I marked the tests, I discovered that they made only few mistakes.

In general, even if the pupils made some mistakes, it was clear that they understood the task. The limited amount of reading and its simplification contributed to understanding.

2. WRITING

Writing is another problematic area for dyslexic children. They have difficulties in handwriting, spelling, word formation and sentence structure. The easiest way to prevent the pupils from these problems during testing is not to ask them to write in complicated sentences or expressions, or to offer them other means of completing the task (e.g. a list of words that could be matched with appropriate expressions, etc.). Besides, we can ask the children just to finish incomplete words or put some elements of a word or sentence into the right order.

The tests that I designed showed that the modifications mentioned above can facilitate the pupils' completion of the tests. The pupils fulfilled the tasks with minimum of writing. Moreover, they made considerably fewer mistakes in spelling and also other tested items (on which the tests focused) were completed successfully. The reason was that the pupils could concentrate merely on the required language issues, they were not

disturbed by writing that represents a very demanding task for them. It can be illustrated for example on the second exercise of the first test (see p. 33), the pupils copied the suitable words from the list. Spelling mistakes in this exercise were really exceptional.

However, the other exercises of the tests demonstrated that spelling in English is a big problem for dyslexic children. Some of them made errors even in copying some words – e.g. in the crosswords. Therefore, it is essential to preteach carefully spelling of the words that are required in the exercises.

3. FOCUS OF THE TEST

Before starting to design a test, the tester must realize what language item he/she wants to test and accordingly, to evaluate appropriate tasks.

According to the theoretical conclusions concerning dyslexic children's language learning, it is efficient to focus just on one language item in each exercise - knowledge (vocabulary and grammar) or skills (reading, listening, etc.). With reference to this choice, it is necessary to design the format of the test that would urge the pupils to demonstrate just the tested item. All additional tasks that the test demands due to too complex exercises, disturb the children's attention and make the completion of the exercise more difficult. Consequently, the final result does not show the pupils' real performance.

The research showed that the restriction of the scope of the test could help the pupils to concentrate on their task well. Additionally, their performance was not limited by other problematic tasks (as spelling of the words and so on). It can be demonstrated again on the first exercise of the test no. 2 (see p. 41). The pupils had learnt the past simple tense for more than three weeks. Since their task was to fill in the missing letters of the appropriate verb form, they concentrated only on this task, they evoked their knowledge and successfully completed the task.

The format of the discrete-point test proved to be an appropriate means of assessing dyslexic children's performance.

4. MOTIVATION

Another factor that must be taken into account when designing a test for dyslexic pupils is motivation. The test should motivate them in two respects. Firstly, the tasks must be challenging but not too difficult to support pupils' confidence. If the pupils have experienced a certain success in test taking, their attitude towards learning positively changes.

On the other hand, the format of the test should attract pupils to fulfill the tasks. Therefore, it is appropriate to use visuals.

The research proved that the picture and crossword helped to motivate the pupils very much. In the first test, I drew a boy. Since my drawing looked really childish and not very successful (it was the aim of my drawing), the pupils laughed when they saw it. They wanted to know more about the picture by matching the suitable expressions. Visuals belong to the world of a child, they add another dimension to the tasks. They did not only make the tasks more attractive, they also clarified them.

In the second test, I used a crossword puzzle. Since almost all people like crosswords and are used to completing them, the pupils did not consider this activity to be a test, but a game or a certain leisure time activity. This contributed to the more relaxed atmosphere that led the pupils to look forward to discovering the clue.

On the other hand, the test also showed how an inappropriate layout of the test can be confusing. Even if the pupils tried to do their best, due to a bad organization of the exercises, it was very difficult for them to complete the task.

5. EFFECT OF THE TEST

The results of the test influence the approach of the pupils towards further tests. Moreover, the results can even change the approach of the pupils towards the language as a whole. If they can see that they are able to fulfill the tasks in the test, their awareness arises and they are not afraid of testing. However, the results of the test are also a rich source of information for the teacher about pupils' knowledge. Besides, it demonstrates if the test format suits the needs of the pupils. Therefore it is crucial for the teacher to take these results as a basis for the next work in the class. He/she should focus on improvement of the class procedures and consequently, on the modification of next tests.

During piloting my tests, I realized that the English instructions did not guide the pupils sufficiently. Therefore, I modified the second test's instructions – I translated them into Czech. Afterwards, there were no problems with understanding.

I was also aware of the fact that instructions could have been clearer if I used examples. Consequently, I used an example in the third test to specify the task. I wanted to show the pupils that they should make yes/no questions, not open questions. That is why I used the example in Czech. Unfortunately, this exercise would require one more example, the question structure. If I had prepared another test for these pupils, I would have used more examples.

6. EVALUATION OF THE TESTS

In order to evaluate the effects of my project, it is necessary to summarize the outcomes of my research.

I tried to design suitable tests for dyslexic pupils that would be in accordance with the theoretical findings. First two tests supported my thesis. Dyslexic pupils were able to “compete” with their non-dyslexic schoolmates. For the first time, their results were comparable. However, some tasks in tests no. 1 and 2 and the whole test 3 showed that the work with dyslexic children is complex and requires a long-term analysis of their individual needs.

Even if the pupils proved in the test no. 2 that they knew the rules of the past simple tense formation, they failed when they were asked to apply them without any prompts. The reason could be that the teacher concentrated on question formation in the last classes rather than on reviewing the use of the past simple tense. Since the pupils were trying to acquire this new item, they did not remember the previous (old) one sufficiently due to their weaker long-term memory.

Moreover, despite the modification of the second and third tasks of the test no. 3, the pupils did not succeed in completion of questions. I discovered that dyslexic pupils need longer time for practising a language issue. Unsufficient practice of questions formation led to unsatisfactory results.

Besides, I realized that since I did not teach in the class regularly for a long time, I could not prepare the pupils sufficiently for the test tasks from the point of test taking as well as from the point of grammar understanding. I also discovered that it is difficult

to design a perfect test that would suit all the pupils. Each individual child has different individual needs and it is impossible for teachers to create individual tests for each pupil.

Moreover, the lack of my constant work in the class lowered the chances of the pupils to succeed. Even if I knew that they practised the language items I wanted to test, I did not know precisely how they had been prepared – what kinds of additional strategies and tasks (different from the textbook) they were used to. I could not even train the pupils in activities that would correspond to their needs (and that were used in the tests afterwards).

Moreover, I did not have the possibility to teach the pupils how to take the test. Using for example the SPLASH strategy (Meese), pupils would have acquired some basic steps to take a test and consequently, testing procedures would have become to them much easier.

Additionally, due to my infrequent intervention in the class, I could not give the pupils appropriate feedback to their performance. Therefore, an important part of motivation was missing. The constant work in the class is really crucial.

All these insufficiencies support the vital requirements of effective testing. Testing should become an ordinary part of classes and of the classroom practice. This procedure guarantees a relevant test content.

7. CONCLUSION

Comparing the theoretical findings about dyslexic children's needs and methodological principles of preparing tests for them with practical implementation of these findings, the following conclusions can be stated:

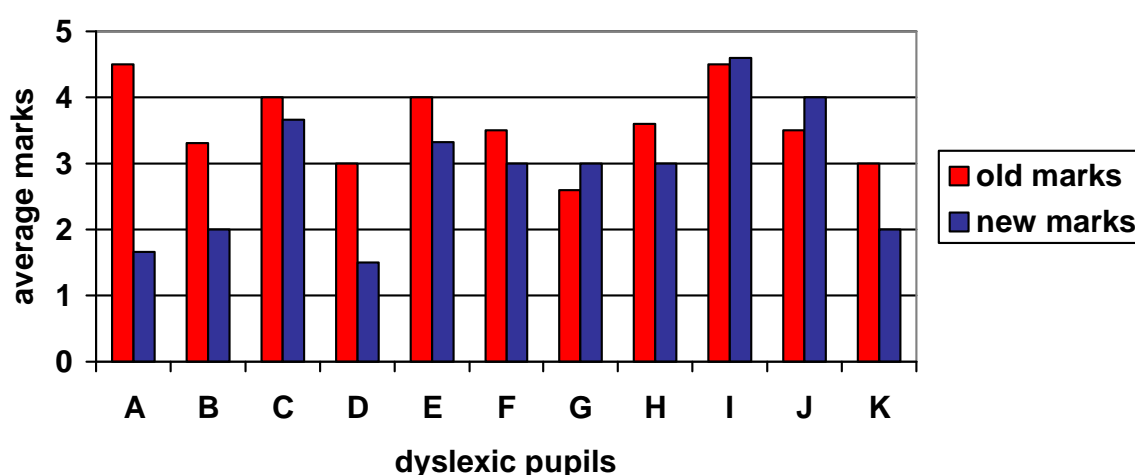
- ◆ tests must be given to pupils after a thorough practice of items that are to be tested
- ◆ instructions must not hinder understanding of tasks
- ◆ a variety of prompts that would help to grasp the task should be used
- ◆ layout of the test should make orientation in tasks easier
- ◆ the language used in the test must be appropriate to the pupils' level
- ◆ tests must be preceded by corresponding pretesting activities
- ◆ piloting the tests for dyslexic children must be accomplished.

CHAPTER 4 - SUMMARY

The project proved that testing of dyslexic children requires a complex analysis of children's needs and consequent modification of teaching/learning process with regard to findings of this analysis.

Although the assessment of the tests was not the aim of this diploma thesis, I want to demonstrate the positive influence of modification of the tests on the difference between the results obtained from the ordinary tests and from the modified ones. The comparison is demonstrated in the following graphs. The marks were given in both cases by the teacher (I just evaluated the tests by points) and thus the rating scale of the teacher's tests is comparable with the rating scale of the tests designed by me.

Graph no. 7 - Comparison of the marks of dyslexic children received from the tests designed by the class teacher (non-modified tests) and me (modified tests)



Improvement of the results after modification of the tests:

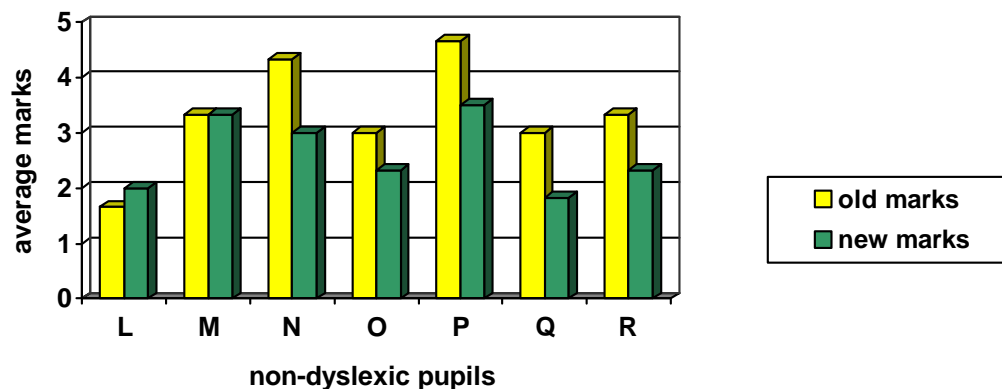
("+" better, "-" worse)

A: + 2,8	G: - 0,4
B: + 1,3	H: - 0,4
C: + 0,3	I: - 0,1
D: + 1,5	J: - 0,5
E: + 0,6	K: + 2
F: + 0,5	

As it is obvious from the graph, the marks of majority of the pupils ameliorated. The modifications probably suited the needs of these children. Yet there are four exceptions. However, their results were influenced by an incomplete set of marks. The pupils “G” and “H” took only the first test and the pupil “J” also did not take the test no. 2, in which all other children got the best results.

The following graph shows the change of results of non-dyslexic pupils.

Graph no. 8 – Comparison of the marks of non-dyslexic pupils received from the tests designed by the teacher (non-modified tests) and me (modified tests)



Improvement of the results after modification of the tests:

(“+” better, “-“ worse)

L: - 0,3

M: 0

N: + 1,3

O: + 0,6

P: + 1,1

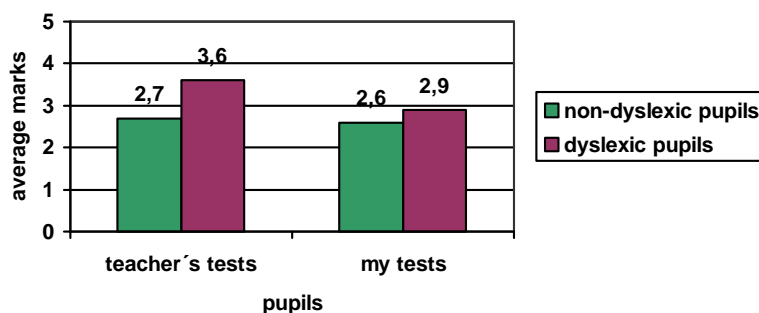
Q: + 1,2

R: + 1

When analysing the results from the graph no. 7, it is evident that also the non-dyslexic part of the class ameliorated their marks. They probably also welcome the modification of the tests. However, the changes of marks are not as distinctive as the ones of non-dyslexic children.

Finally, the overall comparison of the average marks received from the test designed by me and by the class teacher will be presented.

Graph no. 9 – Comparison of the average marks of non-dyslexic and dyslexic pupils from the tests designed by the class teacher and me



Comparison of the results from the graph no. 9 proves that both groups of pupils (dyslexic and non-dyslexic pupils) ameliorated their marks. Yet the graph demonstrates that the positive change was much bigger in the dyslexic children's marks. In conclusion, the modifications helped the dyslexic pupils show that their performance in English language can be considered to be comparable to the results of their non-dyslexic schoolmates.

The project also proved several important truths that must be taken into account when working with dyslexic children.

Firstly, testing dyslexic children must become a part of teaching. If the aim of the test is to mirror what pupils know, then it is necessary to suit the test procedures to teaching/learning procedures meeting the needs of these children.

Secondly, testing dyslexic children requires a constant process of pretesting, modification and testing. The results of a pretest indicate what modification was effective and what should be improved. Consequently, the new modification must be applied to testing.

Finally, it was also proved that a practice of testing skills should become an important part of the teaching/learning process. Only after the dyslexic children get used to the format and procedures of a test, they are able to concentrate on their tasks, and thus, succeed.

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APPENDIX